

PROVISION OF SPECIAL SERVICES FOR ELDERLY VOTERS AT POLLING STATIONS DURING THE 2024 REGIONAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract. This research analyzes the provision of special services for elderly voters at polling stations during the 2024 Regional Head Election in Bengkulu City using Søren Winter's Integrated Implementation Model. Through qualitative methods including in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies, significant gaps were identified between KPU Decree Number 66 of 2024 and field implementation. The top-down policy formulation without regional KPU involvement resulted in formalistic adaptation lacking local context. Limited understanding among KPPS officers, minimal resource allocation, and absence of a specialized elderly services unit in the Bengkulu City KPU contributed to inconsistent service quality across polling stations. KPPS officers developed discretion and adaptation strategies based on personal values, while elderly voters demonstrated passive responses due to limited awareness of their rights. Though elderly voter participation rates remained high at approximately 70-75%, participation quality was compromised by accessibility barriers. Effective implementation requires a participatory approach to policy formulation, adequate resource allocation, enhanced officer capacity, cross-sectoral collaboration, and

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structured evaluation mechanisms to safeguard elderly citizens' political rights and promote inclusive democracy.

Keywords: Elderly Voters, Electoral Accessibility, Policy Implementation, Regional Elections, Special Services.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini menganalisis penyediaan layanan khusus bagi pemilih lanjut usia di tempat pemungutan suara selama Pemilihan Kepala Daerah 2024 di Kota Bengkulu menggunakan Model Implementasi Terpadu dari Søren Winter. Melalui metode kualitatif meliputi wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi, ditemukan kesenjangan signifikan antara Keputusan KPU Nomor 66 Tahun 2024 dengan implementasi di lapangan. Formulasi kebijakan top-down tanpa melibatkan KPU daerah menghasilkan adaptasi formalistik yang kurang kontekstual. Pemahaman terbatas petugas KPPS, alokasi sumber daya minimal, dan ketiadaan unit khusus penanganan lansia di KPU Kota Bengkulu berkontribusi pada inkonsistensi kualitas layanan antar TPS. Petugas KPPS mengembangkan diskresi dan strategi adaptasi berdasarkan nilai personal, sementara pemilih lansia menunjukkan respons pasif akibat keterbatasan pengetahuan tentang hak mereka. Meskipun tingkat partisipasi pemilih lansia cukup tinggi sekitar 70-75%, kualitas partisipasi terkompromikan oleh hambatan aksesibilitas. Implementasi efektif memerlukan pendekatan partisipatif dalam formulasi kebijakan, alokasi sumber daya memadai, peningkatan kapasitas petugas, kolaborasi lintas sektor, dan mekanisme evaluasi terstruktur untuk menjamin hak politik warga lansia dan mendorong demokrasi inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Aksesibilitas Pemilu, Implementasi Kebijakan, Layanan Khusus, Pemilih Lansia, Pemilihan Daerah.

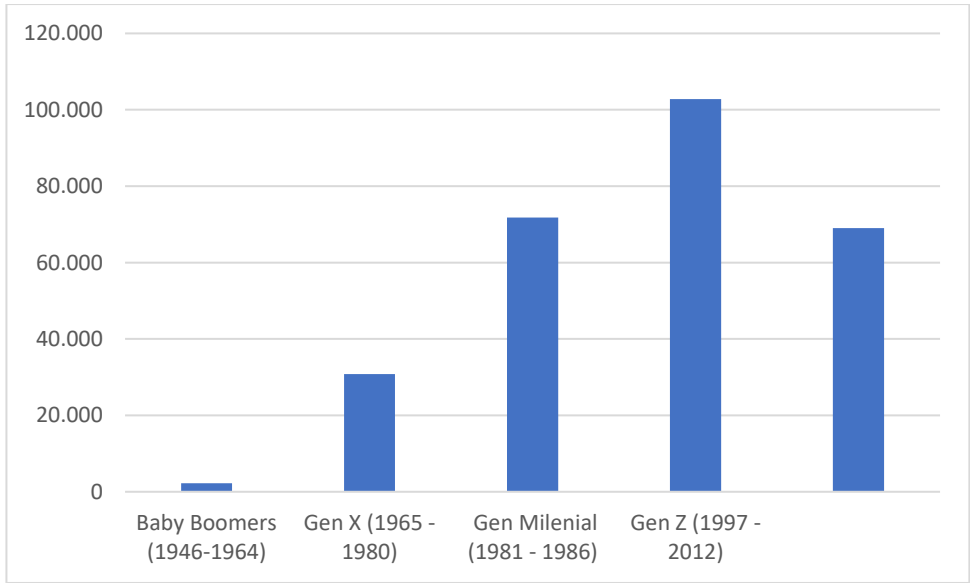
INTRODUCTION

Democracy, as a system of government based on people's sovereignty, has elections as one of its main pillars. In Indonesia, regional head elections (pilkada) represent a crucial moment for citizens to determine their local leaders. However, in practice, this democratic process still faces various challenges, particularly regarding

voter participation from certain groups, one of which is elderly voters Aspinall & Mietzner (2019).

In Bengkulu City, data from the Central Statistics Agency (2023) in the publication "Statistics of the Elderly Population 2022" shows that 26.51% of the elderly population experiences health complaints that interfere with daily activities. This situation has direct implications at the local level, particularly in Bengkulu City, where the number of elderly voters shows significant figures. Based on data from the Bengkulu City Electoral Commission (KPU) for the 2024 Election, the number of elderly voters (aged 60 and above) in Bengkulu City reached 28,010 individuals out of a total of 255,811 voters registered in the Permanent Voter List (DPT). This figure is equivalent to 10.95% of the total voters in the city (Bengkulu City KPU, 2023). This proportion indicates that their votes have significant potential to influence the outcome of the 2024 Regional Head Election.

Figure 1
Voter Composition by Generation in Bengkulu City



Source: Bengkulu City Electoral Commission (KPU), 2024

As shown in Figure 1, the proportion of elderly voters reaching 10.95% of total voters represents a group that cannot be ignored in the context of regional head elections. The increase in the number of elderly voters from 25,423 people in the 2018 Regional Elections to 28,010 people in the 2024 Regional Elections demands adjustments in the provision of voting services that consider their special needs

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Despite the continuing increase in elderly voters, various challenges remain in efforts to enhance their participation in the democratic process. One of the main challenges faced by elderly voters is their vulnerability to hoaxes and fake news, especially in the digital era. Research in Dangin Puri Kauh Village revealed several specific challenges faced by elderly voters, such as difficulty accessing polling stations located on upper floors. These findings affirm the importance of accessibility considerations in planning polling station locations Jayadi & Haes (2024). Furthermore, the study identified a series of complex challenges faced by elderly voters in the electoral process.

Polling station accessibility becomes a primary issue, where many voting locations are not yet fully accessible to elderly voters, especially those with mobility limitations. This potentially hinders their participation in elections. Additionally, the complexity of voting procedures with various types of ballots often confuses elderly voters, which can affect their ability to vote effectively.

Limitations in accessing and understanding information about elections and candidates also present significant barriers for elderly voters. They often experience difficulties in obtaining or processing the information needed to make informed decisions. Vulnerability to political manipulation and the influence of hoaxes and disinformation also increases risks to the integrity of their choices.

To address these challenges, the Electoral Commission (KPU) has issued several regulations that specifically govern the facilitation of elderly voters. The most recent is KPU Decision Number 66 of 2024 on Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of Voting and Vote Counting in General Elections. This decision comprehensively regulates the rights and facilitation for elderly voters at polling stations, including the provision of special access and facilities. Additionally, KPU Regulation Number 9 of 2022 on Community Participation in the Implementation of General Elections also emphasizes the importance of inclusive participation and accessibility for all community groups, including elderly voters.

However, although these regulations appear comprehensive, there are several aspects that need to be critically examined. First, implementation in the field often does not align with established rules, as shown by findings from Soliha Solihah et al., (2018)

on the importance of participatory oversight. Further, Goerres (2007) in his study on the political participation of older people in Europe, emphasizes that electoral accessibility for the elderly is not only about physical access to polling stations but also includes accessibility of information, ease of voting procedures, and consideration of mobility and health limitations that elderly voters might experience.

Second, these regulations tend to focus on the physical accessibility of polling stations but pay less attention to other aspects such as digital literacy and vulnerability to information manipulation often experienced by elderly voters. Third, although there are provisions for special facilitation, there is no clear mechanism to ensure that polling station officers have adequate understanding and skills in handling the special needs of elderly voters. Finally, sanctions imposed for violations of accessibility provisions are often not stringent enough to encourage full compliance from election organizers at the local level.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method with an analytical descriptive approach. The main focus of this research is the implementation of special services provision for elderly voters at Polling Stations (TPS) during the 2024 Regional Head Election in Bengkulu City. This implementation is analyzed using Søren Winter's (2012) Integrated Implementation Model theoretical framework, which identifies seven key aspects in the policy implementation process consisting of Political Process and Policy Formulation, Policy Design, Organizational Behavior and Inter-organizational Relations, Street-level Bureaucrats' Behavior, Target Groups' Behavior, Socio-economic Conditions, and Policy Impact.

This research was conducted in Bengkulu City, the capital of Bengkulu Province, located on the western coast of Sumatra Island. The selection of this location is based on the demographic characteristics of Bengkulu City, which has a significant elderly population, with the number of elderly voters reaching 28,010 individuals (10.95%) out of a total of 255,811 registered voters in the 2024 Election Permanent Voter List (DPT) (Bengkulu City KPU, 2024). This figure shows an increase from the 2018 Regional Elections, where elderly voters numbered 25,423 individuals (10.07%). In this research,

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data collection techniques will include three main methods: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study.

The selection of informants in this research is conducted using purposive sampling method, which allows researchers to select informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Data analysis in this research will adopt an approach inspired by Goerres's (2009) analytical framework, adapted to the context of elderly voter participation in Bengkulu City.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Political Process And Policy Formulation Aspect

Based on the research findings, it was discovered that the policy formulation process related to special services for the elderly at polling stations was dominated by a top-down approach. The Bengkulu City Electoral Commission (KPU) was not directly involved in the drafting of KPU Decision Number 66 of 2024, which serves as the main technical guideline in implementing special services for the elderly at polling stations. As expressed by ER (Head of Electoral Technical Implementation, Public Relations Participation Sub-division of Bengkulu City KPU): "Overall, we were never involved in the creation or formulation of that policy. The policy formulation process occurs at the central level, and we in the regions only receive the final results which are then disseminated to us through various coordination forums."

The minimal involvement of the Bengkulu City KPU in the policy formulation process impacts several areas. First, the resulting policy is less contextual to the specific conditions in Bengkulu City. Second, there is a gap in understanding about the policy substance because the Bengkulu City KPU did not experience the deliberation process that preceded the final decision. Third, there is a low sense of ownership toward the policy, which influences the level of implementation commitment.

Furthermore, research findings also indicate that the adaptation of national regulations into the local context remains formalistic and has not yet touched on substantive aspects. The top-down policy formulation model and the lack of substantive adaptation at the local level reflect what Winter refers to as "policy symbolism" - a situation where policies are made more for symbolic purposes rather than for substantive

implementation. In the case of special services for the elderly at polling stations, it is evident that the policy design has not fully considered the complexity of implementation at the local level.

These findings also reveal a gap between the idealization of inclusive policy and the reality of implementation. KPU Regulation No. 66 of 2024 formally adopts inclusive service principles as proposed by Warburton et al. (2018), yet its implementation has not been optimal due to the minimal involvement of local stakeholders in policy formulation and adaptation.

Policy Design Aspect

a) Clarity of Standards

Research findings indicate that KPU Regulation No. 66 of 2024 has formally established sufficiently clear standards regarding the provision of special services for the elderly at polling stations. These standards include provisions for queue priority, permissible physical assistance, and technical specifications related to polling station accessibility.

However, interestingly, there is a significant comprehension gap between the clarity of standards in policy documents and the understanding of implementers in the field. This phenomenon confirms Mazmanian and Sabatier's (1983) thesis that textual clarity of policy does not automatically correlate with implementation clarity. The KPPS officers as frontline implementers have limited and varied understanding of special service standards for the elderly, especially on technical aspects such as waiting chair standards, accessible polling station dimensions, and assistance protocols.

This condition demonstrates a policy transmission problem, where established standards fail to be optimally translated into implementers' understanding. Edwards III (1980) identifies that one critical factor in policy implementation is communication between formulation and implementation. In the context of this research, the policy communication process from the central KPU to the KPPS level experiences distortion and simplification, resulting in frontline implementers not obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the service standards that should be applied.

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b) Appropriateness of Policy Instruments

The second sub-aspect of policy design is the appropriateness of policy instruments used. Winter (2012) emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate policy instruments, which can be regulatory, incentive-based, or persuasive approaches. Research findings show that KPU Regulation No. 66 of 2024 predominantly uses a regulatory approach, providing normative provisions on how special services for the elderly should be provided.

This regulatory approach has advantages in terms of clarity and certainty of standards, but has limitations in ensuring effective implementation in the field. As suggested by Hood (1986) regulatory instruments need to be complemented with other instruments such as incentives, capacity, and information to achieve optimal effectiveness. In the context of implementing special services for the elderly at polling stations, regulatory instruments are not supported with incentives for implementers who successfully provide quality services or sanctions for those who fail to meet standards.

The absence of incentive mechanisms results in officers' motivation to provide special services for the elderly being more based on personal awareness rather than a systematic reward structure. This personal awareness-based motivation is fluctuating and unreliable as a basis for consistent policy implementation. This condition confirms the theory of motivation in public policy implementation proposed by Lipsky (1980), that Street-level Bureaucrats tend to develop coping mechanisms and task prioritization when faced with various demands without clear incentives.

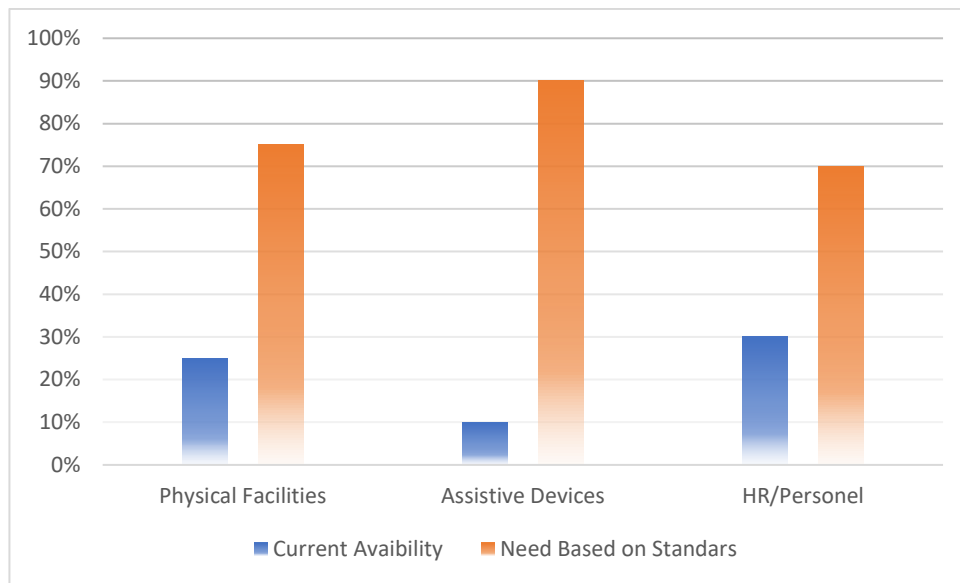
c) Adequacy of Resources

The third sub-aspect of policy design is the adequacy of resources allocated for implementation. Winter (2012) and Edwards III (1980) emphasize that without adequate resources, policy implementation risks failure despite having good design. Research findings show that the implementation of special services for the elderly at polling stations faces a significant resource deficit.

The implementation of special services for elderly voters faces challenges in the form of gaps between resource availability and real needs in the field. This gap affects the quality of services that can be provided to elderly voters

Figure 2.

Gap Between Needs and Resource Availability



Source: Primary Research Data, 2024

The resource gap as shown in Figure 2 results in suboptimal implementation of special services for elderly voters. Limited special budget allocations, minimal supporting facilities, and lack of trained personnel are the main factors hindering service provision according to standards established in regulations.

There is no specific budget allocation for providing services to elderly voters in the Bengkulu City KPU's budget planning. This limitation directly impacts the minimal supporting facilities such as wheelchairs, visual aids, or trained assistants available at polling stations. This condition confirms Grindle's (1980) thesis that policy implementation is strongly influenced by "implementation capacity," including the availability of resources to implement policies.

There is a gap between resource needs based on standards in the KPU Regulation and actual availability in the field. This gap covers aspects of physical

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resources (facilities and equipment), human resources (trained personnel), and financial resources (operational budget).

Organizational Behavior and Inter-organizational Relations Aspect

a) Structure and Capacity of the Electoral Commission

Research findings indicate that the organizational structure of the Bengkulu City Electoral Commission (KPU) does not have a specific unit or personnel responsible for elderly voter services. This responsibility is integrated into the general election administration tasks handled by the Electoral Implementation Technical Sub-division. This condition results in a lack of focus and special attention to elderly voter issues, which represent a group with specific needs in the voting process.

From an organizational capacity perspective, the Bengkulu City KPU faces significant limitations, both in terms of personnel and other resources. With seven civil servants and five commissioners who must handle all aspects of elections, including special services for the elderly, a condition occurs that Meyers and Nielsen (2012) refer to as "capacity shortfalls," where organizational capacity is not proportional to the complexity of tasks that must be carried out.

This capacity limitation is also reflected in the minimal information systems and specific data collection mechanisms for elderly voters. The Bengkulu City KPU does not have a data collection system that can specifically identify the needs of elderly voters at various polling stations. Gil-Garcia (2012) in "e-Government Success Factors" emphasizes the importance of integrated information systems in enhancing the capacity of public organizations to respond effectively to citizens' needs.

Also noteworthy is the limitation of the Bengkulu City KPU in developing effective knowledge management related to elderly voter services. Rashman et al. (2009) identify knowledge management as a crucial factor in enhancing the capacity of public organizations to innovate and improve services. The lack of documentation and learning from previous electoral experiences related to elderly voter services hinders sustainable improvement of organizational capacity.

b) Vertical and Horizontal Coordination

Research findings show that vertical coordination between the Bengkulu City KPU with the Provincial KPU and Central KPU regarding the implementation of special services for the elderly operates within the general framework of electoral administration coordination. There is no specific coordination mechanism designed to optimize service implementation for elderly voters. The coordination that takes place is more informative (regulatory dissemination) and administrative (reporting) rather than substantive (problem and solution discussion).

This phenomenon reflects what Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) call a "coordination trap," where formal coordination is carried out but does not produce the substantive collaboration necessary to address complex problems. In the context of elderly voter services, vertical coordination that is procedural without in-depth substance results in minimal learning and continuous improvement.

More concerning is the minimal horizontal coordination between the Bengkulu City KPU and other relevant institutions, such as the Social Affairs Department, elderly organizations, or academics. The Bengkulu City KPU has never conducted specific coordination with these parties to discuss improving services for elderly voters. Emerson et al. (2012) in the "Collaborative Governance Framework" emphasize that complex public problems require a cross-sectoral collaborative approach involving various stakeholders.

These findings regarding minimal vertical and horizontal coordination confirm Winter's proposition about the importance of inter-organizational relations in policy implementation. Coordination limitations become an inhibiting factor for the formation of a synergistic and comprehensive implementation ecosystem, which ultimately impacts the quality of services received by elderly voters.

c) Organizational Commitment

Research findings reveal a gap between the verbal commitment of the Bengkulu City KPU and actual actions in implementing special services for the

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elderly. Verbally, the Bengkulu City KPU declares its commitment to implementing all provisions in KPU Regulation No. 66/2024, including those related to special services for the elderly. However, this commitment is not yet fully reflected in concrete actions and policies.

This gap is evident from several indicators: (1) the absence of specific resource allocation for elderly voter services, (2) the absence of special programs or initiatives focusing on improving services for elderly voters, (3) elderly voter issues have not become a priority in the KPU's work agenda, and (4) the absence of specific monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for implementing special services for the elderly.

Street-level Bureaucrats' Behavior Aspect

a) KPPS Officers' Understanding

Research findings indicate a significant comprehension gap among KPPS officers regarding provisions for special services for the elderly. Their understanding is largely limited to aspects of priority in queues, while other technical aspects such as waiting chair standards, accessible polling station dimensions, and assistance protocols are less well understood. This comprehension gap occurs despite the Electoral Commission having conducted Technical Guidance (Bimtek) and distributed KPPS Pocket Books containing provisions for special services for the elderly.

This comprehension gap becomes a major inhibiting factor for the effective implementation of special services for the elderly at the polling station level. As suggested by Sandfort and Moulton (2015), limited understanding among frontline implementers results in "selective implementation," where only certain aspects of policy are implemented, while other aspects are neglected. In the context of special services for the elderly, this is reflected in implementation that focuses on queue priority, while other aspects such as physical accessibility of polling stations and assistance protocols receive less attention.

b) Officer Discretion

Research findings show that KPPS officers extensively use their discretion in implementing special services for the elderly amid limited understanding and resources. This use of discretion covers various aspects, from identifying elderly voters who need special assistance, managing priorities in crowded queues, to providing physical assistance to elderly voters.

The use of discretion by KPPS officers also shows significant variation across polling stations, resulting in non-uniformity in service quality. At some polling stations, officers appear very proactive in helping elderly voters, while at other polling stations, officers tend to be passive and only react if there is a request for assistance. This variation can be understood through the concept of "discretionary space" proposed by Evans (2011), which explains that implementers with different understanding and capacity will use the discretionary space in different ways.

These findings confirm Winter's proposition about the central role of Street-level Bureaucrats' discretion in shaping policy implementation. The discretion of KPPS officers allows adaptation of special services policy for the elderly to the local context, but also contributes to significant implementation variation. As suggested by Thomann et al. (2018), the challenge in managing discretion is not to eliminate it, but to direct it to support policy objectives consistently.

c) Adaptation Strategies

Research findings show that KPPS officers develop various adaptation strategies to overcome constraints in implementing special services for the elderly. These strategies include task division among KPPS members to ensure someone specifically attends to the needs of elderly voters, clearer and simpler communication with elderly voters, and flexible queue arrangements to accommodate elderly voters amid crowding.

The adaptation strategies developed by KPPS officers provide important insights into how Street-level Bureaucrats bridge the gap between policy and implementation reality. As suggested by Rice (2012), implementers' adaptation

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strategies do not always reflect deviation from policy, but can represent genuine efforts to achieve policy objectives amid various constraints. In the context of special services for the elderly, KPPS officers' adaptation strategies enable more responsive implementation to the needs of elderly voters despite limited understanding and resources.

d) Values and Capacity

Research findings show that KPPS officers' personal values, especially regarding respect for the elderly, play a significant role in their motivation to provide good service. KPPS officers who have strong values about respecting the elderly tend to be more proactive in helping elderly voters, even with limited resources and specific guidelines. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of "public service motivation" proposed by Andersen et al. (2013), which explains how personal values can drive public servants to make maximum efforts in serving the community.

In terms of capacity, KPPS officers face significant limitations in specific knowledge and skills to serve elderly voters. No special training is provided on how to communicate with or assist elderly voters with various conditions. This limitation is explained by Meyers et al. (2010) as a "capacity shortfall," where implementers are not equipped with adequate capacity to implement policies effectively. This capacity shortfall results in variations in service quality, where officers with better personal capacity (for example, from experience or educational background) can provide better service compared to other officers.

KPPS officers' personal values and capacity become important determining factors in the quality of implementation of special services for the elderly amid limited understanding and resources. As suggested by Van der Heijden and Kuhlmann (2017), in situations with limited formal guidance and resources, implementers' values and capacity become a "safety net" that guarantees a minimal level of policy implementation. These findings affirm Winter's proposition about the important role of Street-level Bureaucrats' personal characteristics in shaping policy outcomes.

Target Groups' Behavior Aspect

a) Elderly Voters' Understanding

Research findings reveal a significant information gap among elderly voters about the special rights and services they should receive at polling stations. The majority of elderly voters interviewed were unaware of special provisions for services for them, such as queue priority, physical assistance, or other special facilities. This phenomenon can be understood through the perspective of "information asymmetry" proposed by Vedung (2017), where there is an imbalance of information between policy organizers and target groups. In the context of special services for the elderly at polling stations, information about special rights and services largely remains with the organizers (KPU and KPPS officers), while elderly voters as the target group have limited information.

The limited understanding of elderly voters can also be explained through the "knowledge gap" theory developed by Melo and Stockemer (2014). They observed that there is a greater electoral information gap among elderly groups compared to other age groups, especially in the era of information digitalization.

The implication of this understanding gap is the low ability of elderly voters to claim their rights to special services at polling stations. When elderly voters do not know that they are entitled to queue priority or physical assistance, they tend to accept standard treatment despite facing difficulties. This condition creates an "implementation gap" as conceptualized by Howlett et al. (2017), where well-designed policies fail to provide optimal benefits to target groups due to problems in the information delivery process.

b) Response and Acceptance

Research findings indicate that elderly voters' responses to services at polling stations tend to be passive and accommodative. The majority of elderly voters accept existing service conditions as normal, even though they are not optimal. They rarely complain or request special services, even when facing difficulties. This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of "cultural conformity" proposed by Warburton et al. (2018). They explain that elderly groups, especially in Asian societies, tend to avoid complaints or demands that

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are considered potentially "troublesome" to others, even though they face difficulties. Cultural values such as patience, not wanting to burden others, and valuing social harmony become factors that influence elderly voters' responses to services at polling stations.

This passive acceptance can also be explained through the "discrepancy theory" developed by Binstock (2009). According to this theory, individuals who have low expectations of a service tend to be more easily satisfied with the services they receive, even though the quality is not optimal. Elderly voters' lack of knowledge about the service standards they should receive results in low expectations, so they tend to accept service conditions as they are.

The perception gap between elderly voters and their families is interesting to observe. Elderly voters tend to assess services from a "relative" perspective (comparing with previous election conditions), while their families assess from a "normative" perspective (comparing with standards that should be). This phenomenon aligns with findings by Strate et al. (2013) who identified differences in service quality interpretation between elderly groups and other age groups.

Nevertheless, elderly voters' responses are not always passive. Some elderly voters, especially those with higher education levels or organizational experience, show more active responses. They explicitly ask for help when facing difficulties or communicate their specific needs to officers. Goerres (2009) identifies that factors such as education level, organizational experience, and political awareness influence elderly voters' assertiveness in claiming their rights.

c) Participation and Characteristics

Research findings show that the participation rate of elderly voters in Bengkulu City is quite high, estimated at around 70-75% based on KPU officers' observations, although there is no validated official data. This high participation rate reflects the strong motivation of elderly voters to participate in the democratic process, despite facing various accessibility challenges.

This strong motivation can be understood through the "habituation" theory developed by Goerres (2009). This theory explains that elderly voters who have

been accustomed to participating in elections throughout their lives tend to maintain this habit in old age. Election participation becomes a kind of "citizenship ritual" that has been deeply internalized within them.

Dependence on family assistance also becomes an important characteristic in elderly voter participation. This dependency phenomenon can produce what Karlawish et al. (2008) call "delegated voting," where elderly voters are highly dependent on assistance and direction from their companions, which potentially affects the autonomy of their choices.

Socio-economic Conditions Aspect

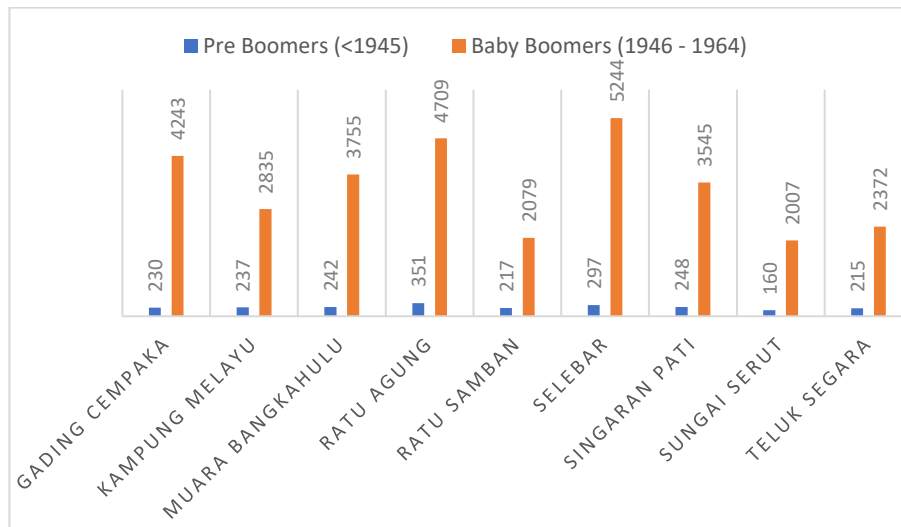
a) Demographic Characteristics

Research findings show that the number of elderly voters belonging to the Baby Boomers group (born 1946-1964) in Bengkulu City reached 30,789 individuals out of a total of 276,623 registered voters, or approximately 11.13% of total voters. The distribution of elderly voters (Baby Boomers) in Bengkulu City by district shows interesting variations. Selebar District has the highest number of elderly voters at 5,244 individuals (17.03% of total elderly voters), followed by Ratu Agung District with 4,709 individuals (15.29%), and Muara Bangkahulu District with 3,755 individuals (12.20%). Meanwhile, districts with the lowest number of elderly voters are Sungai Serut District with 2,007 individuals (6.52%) and Ratu Samban District with 2,079 individuals (6.75%). The geographic distribution of elderly voters in Bengkulu City shows significant variation between districts. This distribution difference has direct implications for planning and implementing special services for elderly voters in each area.

Figure 3.

Distribution of Elderly Voters by District in Bengkulu City

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Source: Bengkulu City Electoral Commission (KPU), 2024

The uneven distribution of elderly voters as shown in Figure 3 creates distinct challenges in implementing special services. Districts with high concentrations of elderly voters such as Selebar (17.03%) and Ratu Agung (15.29%) require special attention in resource allocation and service planning.

In terms of socio-economic characteristics, elderly voters in Bengkulu City show significant diversity. Based on data from BPS Bengkulu City (2023), approximately 15-20% of elderly voters still experience illiteracy or reading difficulties, low levels of digital literacy, and the majority live with families in extended family patterns. These characteristics have important implications for the implementation of special services for the elderly at polling stations.

The relatively low literacy rate makes socialization through written materials less effective for some elderly voters. The significant digital divide makes socialization through digital platforms difficult to reach the majority of elderly voters. Meanwhile, the pattern of living with family provides potential for family assistance in the voting process, which can be a supporting factor in implementation.

b) Geographical Conditions

Research findings indicate that Bengkulu City has diverse geographical characteristics, with relatively hilly topography in some areas and flat in others.

ER (Head of Electoral Technical Implementation Sub-division) explains the challenges posed by these geographical conditions:

These geographical conditions create what James and Garnett (2020) call a "geography of participation," where a person's physical location can facilitate or hinder their participation in the democratic process. For elderly voters with mobility limitations, challenging geographical conditions such as uphill or uneven roads can be significant barriers to accessing polling stations.

Besides topography, Bengkulu City's frequently changing weather conditions, especially during the rainy season, can also make it difficult for elderly voters to access polling stations. Floods or puddles at several points often become barriers to elderly voters' mobility. This condition aligns with observations by Qomah and Suharno (2021) about the influence of physical environmental factors on elderly voter participation.

On the other hand, Bengkulu City, being a medium-sized city with relatively accessible distances between locations, becomes a supporting factor in the coordination and supervision of implementation. BS (Head of Planning, Data, and Information Sub-division of Bengkulu City KPU) explains that in planning the distribution of polling stations, the KPU strives to consider a maximum travel distance of 1-1.5 km for voters, although in implementation it is sometimes difficult to fulfill in all areas.

c) Social Norms and Infrastructure

Research findings indicate that Bengkulu City society has strong social norms regarding respect for the elderly, as is generally the case in Indonesian society.

These social norms become positive social capital for implementing special services for the elderly, but their implementation tends to be informal and spontaneous rather than systematic and structured. At some polling stations, people spontaneously give priority to elderly voters to queue first, even without direction from KPPS officers. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of "social facilitation" identified by Warburton et al. (2018), where positive social norms can facilitate policy implementation without formal intervention.

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However, there are also norms about "not wanting to trouble others" that make some elderly voters reluctant to ask for help or special services even though they need them. This phenomenon reflects what Liddle and Mujani (2007) call "cultural ambivalence" in political participation, where cultural values can both support and hinder effective participation.

In terms of infrastructure, Bengkulu City still has limitations in terms of elderly-friendly public facilities. These infrastructure limitations confirm findings by Aspinall et al. (2019) that infrastructural barriers remain a significant challenge in organizing inclusive elections in Indonesia. As argued by James (2020), implementing inclusive electoral policies requires supporting physical infrastructure; without it, even the most comprehensive policies will face implementation barriers.

There are also variations in social norms and infrastructure in various areas of Bengkulu City. This variation in social norms and infrastructure reflects what Aspinall and Rohman (2017) call "geographic unevenness" in Indonesia's socio-political context, where social, economic, and infrastructure conditions can vary greatly even within the same administrative area. This condition demands a contextual and adaptive implementation approach, not merely applying uniform standards across all regions.

Policy Impact Aspect

a) Availability and Quality of Services

Research findings indicate significant variation in the availability and quality of special services for elderly voters across various polling stations in Bengkulu City. In terms of basic service availability, all observed polling stations have waiting chairs, although the number is not always adequate and there are not always chairs specifically allocated for elderly voters. Queue priority service is implemented inconsistently, where some polling stations actively prioritize elderly voters, while others do not.

Service quality is highly dependent on the initiative and sensitivity of individual KPPS officers, without consistent standards across polling stations.

Some officers are very proactive in identifying and helping elderly voters, while others are more reactive and only help when asked. This condition reflects what Hupe and Hill (2016) call "implementation on the ground," where policy implementation is ultimately strongly influenced by frontline implementers' interpretation and discretion.

Assistance services for elderly voters who need help in the voting process are also implemented with various variations. At some polling stations, assistance is well facilitated, while at others, assistance procedures are less clear or not well socialized to elderly voters. This variation confirms findings by James and Garnett (2020) about the importance of standardization and consistency in providing inclusive electoral services.

From elderly voters' perspective, service quality is rated as "adequate but could be better." This perception reflects what Howlett et al. (2017) call "satisficing implementation," where policy implementation reaches a minimally acceptable level, but has not reached the optimal level it should.

The gap between formal standards and actual implementation can be explained through various factors. First, limited understanding of KPPS officers about special service provisions for the elderly. Second, limited available resources, including waiting chairs, assistive devices, and trained personnel. Third, lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation.

This analysis shows that the availability and quality of special services for the elderly at polling stations are still not optimal and vary across polling stations. As argued by Aspinall et al. (2019), inconsistency in electoral policy implementation can reduce the effectiveness of such policies and potentially create inequities in access to the democratic process. This condition underscores the importance of a more systematic and standardized approach in implementing special services for the elderly.

b) Participation Rate

Research findings show that the participation rate of elderly voters in Bengkulu City is quite high, estimated at around 70-75% based on KPU officers'

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observations. Nevertheless, there is no validated official data because the KPU's data collection system does not separate participation data by age group. This data limitation reflects what Melo and Stockemer (2014) call a "data gap" in the analysis of political participation of specific groups, which limits the ability to accurately evaluate policy impact and develop evidence-based interventions.

Nevertheless, the relatively high participation rate of elderly voters indicates a strong internal motivation to participate in the democratic process, regardless of the quality of services provided. This phenomenon aligns with Goerres's (2007) findings on "habituated participation" among elderly voters, where election participation has become an internalized habit.

What is interesting to observe is the variation in participation rates based on location and demographic characteristics. Observations indicate that "elderly voter participation rates tend to be higher in village areas or suburban areas compared to urban areas." This observation confirms findings by Aspinall and Sukmajati (2016) about variations in political participation based on socio-cultural contexts in Indonesia.

Analysis of elderly voter participation patterns shows an interesting paradox: on one hand, special services for the elderly have not been optimally implemented; on the other hand, elderly voter participation rates remain high. This condition indicates that elderly voter participation is driven more by internal motivation and citizenship values than by the availability of special services. This phenomenon corresponds to what Goerres (2009) calls "resilient political participation," where political participation persists despite facing various obstacles.

However, as argued by James (2020), high participation rates do not always reflect participation quality. Without adequate services, elderly voter participation may be accompanied by difficulties, discomfort, or even compromises to the confidentiality and autonomy of their choices. Therefore, policy impact evaluation should not only focus on participation rates but also on the quality of elderly voters' experience in the participation process.

c) Evaluation and Learning

Research findings show that evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of special services for the elderly at polling stations are still very limited and not systematic. Formally, there is no specific evaluation mechanism for the implementation of elderly voter services. The evaluations conducted are more general for all aspects of election administration. After the election is completed, internal evaluation meetings are held to discuss various aspects, including services for voters. However, discussions about services for elderly voters often do not become the main focus.

The absence of specific evaluation mechanisms reflects what Howlett et al. (2017) call an "evaluation deficit" in the policy cycle, where the evaluation stage does not receive adequate attention compared to other stages. This results in limited learning and improvement based on experience.

The Bengkulu City KPU also does not yet have clear indicators to evaluate the success of special services for the elderly, so evaluations tend to be subjective and anecdotal. This condition contradicts recommendations by DeGroff and Cargo (2009) about the importance of developing clear and measurable indicators for policy implementation evaluation.

Nevertheless, there are valuable learnings from experiences so far, which form the basis for future improvement plans. Based on these learnings, the Bengkulu City KPU has several plans to improve services for elderly voters in upcoming elections, such as special budget allocations for providing facilities for elderly voters, development of special training modules on elderly voter services in KPPS officer technical guidance, and more intensive socialization to elderly voters.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the research and discussion about the Provision of Special Services for Elderly Voters at Polling Stations during the 2024 Regional Head Election in Bengkulu City, several conclusions can be drawn:

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1. The implementation of special services for the elderly at polling stations during the 2024 Regional Elections in Bengkulu City has not yet been optimal. This is reflected in the significant gap between formal provisions in KPU Decision Number 66 of 2024 and actual practice in the field. Although various provisions for special services for the elderly have been formally regulated, their implementation remains partial and varies across polling stations, with service quality highly dependent on the initiative and sensitivity of individual KPPS officers.
2. The political process and policy formulation remain dominated by a top-down approach, where the Bengkulu City KPU is not substantively involved in policy development. Adaptation of regulations to the local context remains formalistic and has not considered the specific needs of elderly voters in Bengkulu City. Non-involvement in the formulation process results in understanding gaps and low sense of ownership toward the policy.
3. Policy design shows a gap between the clarity of formal standards and implementers' understanding in the field. Standards written in the KPU Regulation are not optimally transmitted to KPPS officers, while policy instruments rely too heavily on regulatory approaches without supporting incentive mechanisms and adequate resource allocation.
4. The organizational structure and inter-organizational relations of the Bengkulu City KPU do not have specific units or personnel responsible for elderly voter services, so this issue receives inadequate attention. Vertical coordination is procedural and not substantive, while horizontal coordination with relevant stakeholders (Social Affairs Department, elderly organizations) is almost non-existent. Organizational commitment to special services for the elderly remains limited to verbal statements without adequate resource allocation support.
5. The behavior of Street-level Bureaucrats (KPPS Officers) becomes a crucial factor determining implementation quality at the polling station level. Amid limited understanding, resources, and specific guidelines, KPPS officers develop discretion and adaptation strategies to provide services to elderly voters. This

behavior is strongly influenced by personal values and capacity, resulting in significant service variations across polling stations.

6. Target Groups' (Elderly Voters) behavior shows significant understanding gaps, where the majority of elderly voters are unaware of the special rights and services they should receive. Their responses tend to be passive and accommodative, with relatively high participation rates despite facing various accessibility barriers. Elderly voter participation patterns are driven more by internal motivation and citizenship values than by the availability of special services.
7. Bengkulu City's socio-economic conditions, including elderly voters' demographic characteristics, geographical conditions, and social norms and infrastructure, form a complex context for implementation. Social norms regarding respect for the elderly become positive social capital, but limitations in elderly-friendly infrastructure become significant barriers. Variations in socio-economic conditions across areas demand a contextual implementation approach, which has not been fully accommodated in policy implementation.
8. Policy impact has not been optimal, with varying availability and quality of services across polling stations. Although elderly voter participation rates are quite high, this is driven more by internal motivation than by the availability of special services. The absence of structured and data-based evaluation mechanisms hinders continuous learning and improvement.

Overall, the implementation of special services for the elderly at polling stations during the 2024 Regional Elections in Bengkulu City still faces various fundamental challenges related to policy formulation, implementation design, organizational structure, coordination, implementer capacity, and evaluation mechanisms. These findings confirm Winter's proposition that policy implementation is a complex process influenced by various interacting factors, from policy formulation processes to target group characteristics and socio-economic contexts.

Suggestions

Based on the research results and conclusions, here are several recommendations to improve the implementation of special services for the elderly at polling stations during Regional Elections:

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1. Development of a more participatory policy formulation approach involving regional KPUs, local stakeholders, and representatives of elderly groups to ensure policies are responsive to specific needs at the local level.
2. Preparation of more detailed and practical Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) regarding special services for the elderly at polling stations, accompanied by concrete examples and visual illustrations to facilitate understanding of officers in the field.
3. Special budget allocation for providing facilities and improving accessibility for elderly voters, including wheelchairs, visual aids, and appointment of trained assistants at polling stations with high concentrations of elderly voters.
4. Formation of specific units or appointment of special personnel at the Bengkulu City KPU focused on services for vulnerable voters, including the elderly, to ensure this issue receives adequate attention in planning and implementation.
5. Demographic mapping and analysis of elderly voters in Bengkulu City as a basis for planning polling station locations, resource allocation, and provision of services appropriate to the characteristics of the elderly population in each area.
6. Development of special socialization programs for elderly voters with methods and materials adapted to the preferences and abilities of elderly voters, such as face-to-face socialization at elderly health posts or regular meetings of elderly groups.
7. Improvement of training quality for KPPS officers by adding special modules on elderly voter services, accompanied by simulations and direct practice handling various scenarios that might be encountered in the field.
8. Building cross-sectoral cooperation with the Social Affairs Department, Health Department, elderly organizations, and relevant stakeholders to integrate support for elderly voters into existing programs.
9. Provision of special transportation for elderly voters on election day, especially in areas with challenging geographical conditions or limited public transportation infrastructure.

10. Development of special monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the implementation of elderly voter services, including clear performance indicators and data collection systems that can separate participation by age group.
11. Documentation and dissemination of good practices developed by KPPS officers in serving elderly voters as learning materials and for replication at other polling stations.
12. Active involvement of elderly voters in the service evaluation process through satisfaction surveys, focused discussion forums, or other feedback mechanisms to ensure their perspectives are considered in future service improvements.

Implementation of these recommendations is expected to improve the quality of special services for the elderly at polling stations, thereby supporting higher quality participation of elderly voters in the local democratic process. This improvement will not only guarantee the political rights of the elderly but also contribute to strengthening inclusive and equitable democracy.

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